

Interview with Theodore Karamanski

April 10, 1995

#### INTERVIEW BEGINS

(Interviewer): Okay, thank you very much. If you don't mind, what I worked out here is I wanted to give you a little more insight into my paper by way of subject matter and headings and kind of ask you questions as I go through it with you.

(Theodore Karamanski): Alrighty.

(I): Okay? First of all, the theme I'm working with right now which may change after this interview is first of all examining the historian's life and their works, combining them, and one thing that really caught my eye was your article *Making History Whole* from the public historian and working with the idea of making history more accessible to the public, and one question I have is from your letter to me. You mention historian's duty to tend to society's historical consciousness and I wonder if you can kind of explain to me so I understand what you mean by that, that statement, what that duty is?

(TK): You caught me in an idealistic moment when I wrote that at the computer. It's one of those things that pragmatism and idealism are sort of like at war, I think, in most people who are involved in history or any other profession that's a real profession. There's the pragmatic reason you do things, there's the idealistic reason and one can be seen as simply a rationalization and at other times a genuine motivation, but when I think of that it in part comes out of my own experience. I mean, we generalize about the world based on our own experience and I was somebody who got interested in history because it was fun and it was interesting and that's because of the way it was presented to me – through historical novels, through historic sites that I visited when I was kid, and through historical films, you know, costume dramas. When I got into history in a more serious way it was still fun because I was exploring and seeing the true depths of what had been presented to me and often times in rather one-dimensional ways. What I found missing in the academic side of it was, I was getting the full dimensional treatment of the subject but it was done in such a manner that even I didn't really enjoy it any longer. And I knew that large numbers of other people would never look at this stuff. The difference between the books that are in the history book club and the books that are reviewed in the back pages of the *Journal of American History* and *American Historical Review*, that gulf is what made me motivated to become more involved in public history, from an idealistic point of view.

(I): Sure. Well another sub-theme or something I was wrestling with was another meaning I had gotten out of the title of that article *Making History Whole* before I actually read it, and that it seemed to me, for me looking at your work, that you were delving into projects that at first had a lot of interest to you personally, and then you kind of explored those through your academic work and your historical work and research topics that were of some joy to you personally. Do you feel that's accurate of me to say that?

(TK): Yeah, certainly true the way I got into the business.

(I): At least at the beginning stage? Okay.

(TK): Yeah, there's no way you're going to go ahead and get a job in this business so you might as well do what you like. So by studying the fur trade, particularly in the way in which I did, when I did, was a topic that was really considered old hat and so forth – the general topic, the fur trade. But I was absolutely enamored with that subject, I mean I ate, slept in the fur trade. [laughs] So that was really pursuing a personal passion.

(I): Okay, well I might get back to the fur trade topic in a minute if you don't mind I'd like to kind of go through my paper's sub-headings with you, and that's definitely going to be one of them. First I want to start off of course with some kind of introduction to your youth and your growing up in Chicago and I was wondering if you could just give me, you know, nothing too lengthy but a sketch of your childhood?

(TK): My parents met working in the factory. My mother was a lab technician for Armor Corporation and my father was a maintenance worker. His father had suffered a disability working for Armor in the railroad yards, and they didn't give him any settlement but they told my dad that when he was old enough he could go there for a job, so when he graduated from high school in 1940 they sent him over there, that's where he was working. Served in the second World War in the Pacific and he came back after the war, got his old job back and met my mother. His career was as an industrial engineer because he did a lot of night school and so he provided us a rather good middle class background on the south side of Chicago. He was working in management and my mother worked part-time then later in life, I had three sisters and we all went to parochial schools, catholic parish schools, and then later catholic high schools. One thing I would kind of point out from that time period I suppose was in 1959 an automobile trip to Canada, to Niagra Falls and on that trip we stopped at Fort Niagra which was a reconstructed fort from the French period and seeing that site just blew me away. Seeing the soldiers on duty there and being able to touch these big cannons and walk the battlements. That's one of the things that began my sort of romance with history.

(I): Great, that's where I was heading next. Alright, appreciate that. I'm thinking back to, I think, the introduction to Deep Woods Frontier where you mention as a child having ideas of the North woods up here in the U.P. and seeing it as a frontier. Did you ever have any trips in your early childhood up here?

(TK): When I was very young, beginning like say 1963 or so, we went to Lower Michigan where my uncle had a cabin around Bangor, Michigan – around Kalamazoo I guess, would be close. But then the year I graduated from grade school, my father took me up to a place that his boss owned on the Sisco Channel Lakes which is down in Gogebic county around Land O' Lakes – between Land O' Lakes and Watersmeet. We went back there for the next ten years or so, every summer, sometimes twice a summer.

(I): Oh, so quite a few trips up there?

(TK): Yeah, and that – the Upper Peninsula was so much better than lower Michigan, you know, uninterrupted forest, was right on the fringes of the Ottawa National Forest, they put in a Sylvania track while we were up there, opened that up to recreation, so it was just a tremendous opportunity for a couple of weeks at least every year for hunting, fishing, that sort of thing.

(I): Sure. Okay, great. Then my next sub-heading I'm going to try to find a Segway into would be your life as a college student. What I'm looking at is using Loyola University as not only where you got your education but then continued as a teacher of course. That seems to be a very important part of your life.

One of the first things I have to ask you about is why you spent a year at Southwest College before going to Loyola?

(TK): That's because I was a fuck-up student in high school. Southwest College is a junior college \_\_\_\_\_, now it's called Richard Daley College, but then it had a little better name. The upshot of it was that I finished up with about a 2.2 GPA and I could have gone to some four-year colleges with that but it was – I didn't know what the hell I was doing. My main plan was to go to University in Illinois. They had a very severe general education program and so my thought was I'll go to the junior college and pick up my survey classes there where it's even cheaper and closer to home, and I'll transfer. In that year, I screwed up even worse than high school my first semester and I ended up – all these junior colleges were jammed with people dodging the Vietnam draft – and I went ahead and couldn't get into any classes that I wanted to I ended up with Physics II, Chemistry II, Biology II, French II and it was just a complete disaster semester. But the next semester I said, "well hell with this, I'm not going to take that abuse," and I took all kinds of – I could never get a history class there – but I took all literature classes. I had eighteen hours of literature classes and it was a hell of a lot of reading, but I just loved reading, it was fun and I did quite well and I transferred over to Loyola. The key thing was not so much my Loyola education, but it was the fact that in my senior year of high school I got a job working at the Field Museum of Natural History as a security guard, and it was that circle of friends that I met there. I mean, I was thinking of going to Circle, then I realized their general education program was so stiff that I would have to learn a foreign language over and above what I had in high school. So I said, "that's nonsense," then I was thinking of going to DePaul, I was going to go into the ROTC program, and a buddy of mine was at Loyola and he says, "Oh come to Loyola, they've got less general education requirements than DePaul," which is really ironic because today Loyola has some of the highest general education requirements and it's because I put them in. [laughs] But that attracted to me to Loyola, I had not really thought it out much.

(I): Okay, one of the underlying questions that I had in here was where you really developed a strong interest as far as history as far as academically and wanting to study that at college. So you kind of had that at Southwest, you wanted to get into history classes...

(TK): Even when I was in high school, I mean about the only thing I could do in school was get an 'A' in was history so my thought was that someday I could be like a history teacher, if I could ever get a degree. [laughs]

(I): Okay, alright. Then at Loyola when you got your bachelor of arts was that in with a history major?

(TK): Yeah, by the time I got to Loyola, I went ahead and started getting my act together academically and I was in the honors program. They had a very strong history program, the competition was unbelievable, they had like 600 history majors and so all the classes were large classes, not large, but like 40 or 50 students in a class. And the students were just so good, and in the honors program we'd have these small seminars and they were still some of the most intense intellectual experiences I had. These were just, I mean we would have seminars where we would read a book a week, and for undergraduates you have five or six other classes, that's pretty stiff.

(I): Right, that sounds it, definitely. Okay, my next big question is when, well I know the years, but in terms of your education when did you go to work for Fischer Stein and what did you do?

(TK): I got into that because of my buddies at the museum. My friend Dave who was also a Loyola archaeology student, he and I used to have these long arguments about what was greater – history or anthropology – and along with arguing about everything else Cubs, Socks, you name it. He did a lot of archaeological work, sometimes with the museum sometimes with Southern Illinois University, and in our senior years he said, “why don’t you go ahead and get involved and work on one of these archaeology projects and we’ll get you paid as a shovel bum digging holes for us, and on the side you do some historical research and show us the degree to which it’s applicable.” I was starting graduate school that fall, and actually got signed up for a course to get credit that summer right after my senior year to work down there with those guys. So I was getting paid, getting a little credit, and dug holes, learned about archaeology, enjoyed it tremendously, I had a lot of fun, but also did some research for them. It was beautiful because they were doing a French fort and they had a 1713 map and they gave me this 1713 map of the fort and they said this fort was built then and we need to know more about it and so forth, and I went and did some work with some French records and did the initial counting research and I came back to them and I said, “look, this wasn’t a French fort,” and they just argued the hell out of me. They didn’t understand that it’s just because it was a map that showed a fort in 1713 – a plan for a fort. It was a plan that was never implemented! And this fort had actually been, I love this because it’s so...where archaeology was in those days is unbelievable and they just had a disdain for documents. This fort was actually at one point the largest military base in the United States. [laughs] But they had no idea it was ever an American military post. Louis and Clarke had visited, Zebulon Pike had been in command there, you know it’s just a complete fiasco – typical of what was wrong with the idea of approaching these things as if they were simply anthropological sites and not integrating the documents. So through that work, I met some more people down in Southern Illinois and after I got out of graduate school I had some contacts down there and I was able to get – I went down there for a short-term job to work on one survey project – and I just kicked ass on that thing and they offered me a full-time job then. So that’s how I came to work for Fischer Stein.

(I): Okay, great that gives me a lot more background. Once you went through your graduate program, how did you get involved in teaching and why teaching and not say, some other field or path?

(TK): Well when I entered the Master’s program it was because there were almost no jobs, really, for people with a Bachelor’s degree in history and a teacher’s certificate because I had done all the teacher ed. stuff in college thinking I was going to be a high school teacher, but there was no jobs out there. So I got a fellowship to go to graduate school, so I went figuring maybe I’d have a better shot with a Master’s. Had there been jobs out there I would have maybe quit at my MA, but by that time my fellowship was good for a year and a half more and I thought, “well I might as well keep going and get the PhD.” I was teaching at Loyola from my first semester – I was initially a research assistant but then they bumped me up to teaching assistant so then we would take these classes once a week for the professor.

(I): Are you talking as a graduate student?

(TK): As a graduate student, yeah. So I taught then as a teaching assistant for two years, and then in my third year of graduate school they let me teach my own class. So I had been doing some teaching at Loyola and I was really good at it, I had really good evaluations, and I just loved it. So I knew I wanted to teach also.

(I): Okay, great. I have some other questions I might come back to depending on how your time holds out here, but I'll hold those for the end if we have time. My next big question is the Mid-American Research Center – what is it, how did it come about, and how did you get involved with that?

(TK): Yeah, now it's just kind of a skeleton. We've actually got a couple grants running through there now. It's just a way to go ahead and put grants into our public history program now. What it was initially was, the work that I was doing for Fischer Stein was essentially historic preservation consulting and I learned how to bid jobs by working with them. When I came back to Loyola it was only on a one-year contract to teach as a replacement for somebody on leave. But I felt it was worth the gamble of giving up this job that I truly enjoyed down in Southern Illinois because I wanted to come back to Chicago and I liked the idea of teaching and I thought that I'd learned enough that I could do this on my own if need be. So we set up a Mid-American Research Center right away in order to go ahead and begin to demonstrate to the University that there was this market out there for history outside the university. So as I began to teach that, in fact before I even started teaching that year part-time, I had a grant in hand to do, along with my friend Dave, an archaeological survey of the forest preserve districts around Crook County. That became our first Mid-American Research project, then after that we've done a wide variety of other types of projects too.

(I): Okay, and do you have anything currently going on through there did you say?

(TK): Well what we're doing currently is we're doing this Great Lakes film project through Mid-American Research Center, but that's using it purely as a paper entity. We at one time had a staff of people and offices and phones and stationary and that. Now it really is just a paper thing.

(I): Okay, the third sub-head from my paper is going to deal with the Northwest – the fur trade and exploration, your book, your articles that I've been able to get on that subject and I've got a pretty good handle on that from what I've read. I have a copy of your dissertation in here and everything too, but specific question I have was when was your first trip up there and why? And I know you talked about it a little as being a big influence...

(TK): Yeah, it certainly was. The first one was in 1972 to northern Manitoba, and then in '73 we went to northern Saskatchewan, and '74 we went to the Northwest Territories and we canoed on a river that had just been made a national park in Canada but it was really utter wilderness and it was a very deadly and dangerous river called the South Nahanni River and we'd read some things about it and this place was full of folk lore about people going in there and getting their heads chopped off and sightings of abominable snowmen or sasquatches, I mean this place had a real rep. German army expedition there in 1962 or so, German army rangers, had like seven people die. We went there and this was like the nuttiest thing we ever did because it was way beyond our skills, but we wanted to. The upshot of it was though, the night before we flew out we camped at a little town called Fort Simpson at the junction of the Liard River and the Mackenzie River, and there was a little black on the ground that had a plaque on it and said, "This was the site of Fort Simpson, it was founded by the Northwest Company in 1805," and I thought to myself, "1805? This place is raw now! What would it have been like in 1805?" That's the question that I set out answering when I came back for my senior year at college at Loyola. I was signed up to do a directed study on Napoleon's peninsula campaign. One of the professors said, "Are you really interested in that?" and I said, "Yeah, sure," "Wouldn't there be something else you'd rather find out about?" Because he hated \_\_\_ history. [laughs] And I said, "Yeah, the fur trade," and he said, "Well do it!" And I wrote a – it essentially amounted to a senior thesis – wasn't required but it was about 60

pages. That became the rough draft for my dissertation and it was finding out about the fur traders on the Mackenzie River.

(I): What was the professor's name?

(TK): Bob – Robert McCluggage, and was chairman of the history department, and one of the reasons we were able to get that public history program together was that when I came back to Loyola in that one year spent, he came up with the idea say, "Let's do a program here," and gave me the room to run with the ball. And I always resented him somewhat when I was in grad school because he seemed distant and not really involved, and I knew I was the best student there or one of the best students there and doing really good things, and he always gave me tremendous latitude, but I also felt that he was really uninvolved, somewhat unconcerned. Didn't really seem to care about helping us get jobs and that, but when he had the chance he came through for me big time.

(I): Great. The next sub-heading I'll be going into will be the Deep Woods Frontier and I think I can spend a lot of time talking on your works on the U.P. because I find them the most captivating to me, personally.

(TK): [laughs] Glad to hear that.

(I): But I've got a few specific question and then a couple that my professors have asked me to ask you about as well if you don't mind.

(TK): Yeah, sure.

(I): I guess I've got an idea of why you became interested in the U.P. now that I've talked to you, but when did you decide to come up and start working up here and how did that take place?

(TK): That's because of public history. After we set up Mid-America Research Center, got the public history program going, I wanted to be able to continue to demonstrate to the university – I was just on a one year contract so it was very important that I demonstrate to the university – the real viability of public history as a concept. And so I set out to build my own client base. You know, down in Southern Illinois we worked mostly in Tennessee and Arkansas and Southern Illinois and that sort of thing. Out of Chicago I mean, I needed to look further to the North, really. So, Upper Peninsula was something I knew, just geographically, and I tried to convince – I wrote this proposal I remember to them – to do a survey of fur trading sites in the National Forests of upper Great Lakes region. And they didn't have a hoot 'n hells interest in this. But what they did say is logging camps. I didn't know shit about logging, I hadn't really thought about it much when I'd been up there, I was always thinking of Indians and fur trade and that when I was up there. I didn't know anything about it at all. One of the archaeologists for the forest service up there at that time was a woman by the name of Jan Braschler and Jan was from Chicago and had a home up on the old same lake I used to vacation on. So she said one time to me, "You know, we got this proposal of yours, why don't you do logging?" and I said, "Well I don't know much about logging," "well why don't you come up here and we'll show you," so she showed me a logging site and we walked over to this logging camp, got ticks all over us. It really got my mind thinking then, so then they needed to have something done on the McCormick track and it was very natural to have somebody from Chicago to work on that obviously. So we got that job and we did a pretty good job for them.

(I): Now is that one you bidden on?

(TK): Yeah, that was a bid. Actually we bid on it against a couple of Upper Peninsula people who very greatly resented the fact that we got that.

(I): Oh I've heard something about that just, okay. [laughter]

(TK): Did you talk to Fred Reedholm?

(I): I haven't talked to him, but I've been reading some interviews that you did with him up here. You know, I've got those at the Longyear Research Library here.

(TK): Yeah. Fred was gracious and helpful but then after he helped us – I mean I didn't go in under false pretenses – he became very bitter...

(I): Oh okay, I wasn't aware of that at all.

(TK): I can really understand it. That was just when I was a young guy starting out, I was a little bit less respectful of – I shouldn't say that, I didn't do anything to hurt anybody but I didn't understand why people would go ahead and feel territorial or otherwise.

(I): Right.

(TK): But anyway, the upshot of it was that worked out okay and then they decided – the forest service – that they would put out a contract to locate logging camps and do a historical context study of them in the Nicolet National Forest in Wisconsin. This was the big one that they told me was coming, they wanted me to go look at some logging sites, and archaeologists were the only ones bidding on it, they had a couple historians working as consultants, but it was all from an archaeological perspective and I busted my ass and wrote a brilliant proposal from a historical perspective and sent it off in the mail and learned a bitter lesson – it didn't get there on time and it was a closed field bidding process, it got there a day late, and here I had spent months working on this proposal and couldn't get the project.

(I): Ouch. That had to hurt. Okay.

(TK): But then a year later they did another one on the Hiawatha, this time I hand delivered it and we got the project. [laughs] So that's how that began.

(I): Yeah I haven't gotten a copy of that, I have the Ottawa report and the McCormick Tract, and I'm looking at your article *The Great Camps of the U.P.*, I'm not sure what the title is there I just made a note to myself...

(TK): Yeah that was it.

(I): And also your Isle Royal narrative history and then Deep Woods Frontier, I've spent quite a bit of time because I've read that whole book through – thoroughly enjoyed that. Question I have, since you brought up Fred Reedholm there, were you ever considering doing a comprehensive history of the U.P. at all? Because you had so much of it in your works here.

(TK): Yeah, I have thought of that and I don't think I'll do it. For a while I thought the next book would be the history of the exploration of Lake Superior and really get into the geological aspect, the geological survey people and the corporate explorers and then the general land off the surveyors and that kind of exploration. But I've not done that and this recent book that's come out on the mining period Krause has written on the Upper Peninsula mining. Does a real excellent job of that from a mineralogical point of view and geologic, so that's something that I'll probably never do. Still I suppose some day in the back of my mind it wouldn't be bad to do a history of the U.P. but it's kind of low on the list now.

(I): Okay, the other area that I'm really interested in and I get caught up in reading your work is the Chicago – U.P. connection with the great camps and all the philanthropists that came up here. Still anything up in the air there that you're considering?

(TK): No, never. But you're right it's a great topic, from the utopian socialists – Yeah, you should do it. That's a great idea.

(I): Well, I know Fred Reedholm has touched on the Bentley trail as far as the Bentley's use up here and things like that but I'm considering all this, I'm learning, I'm still a student, kind of new to this field actually.

(TK): I think that perspective that you just mentioned, if you went ahead and put that together with say William Cronan's *Nature's Metropolis*, I don't know if you've had a chance to read that yet, but that book, subtitled *Chicago and the Great West* – he doesn't really appreciate the extent to which Chicago has this Northern frontier. It's just as much, if not more important. I think that a book like that could have a lot of interest historiographically.

(I): Mokay, great. Well then my next big subheading would be "Chicago and Public History in Chicago". And really your curriculum vita that you sent me opened up a whole world – part of your world that I didn't know about at all – to my research and all the programs you're involved with locally, or at least that's how it seems to me. Would you say that's a big part of your work now?

(TK): Yeah, I think that anybody – you can ask your professors about this – but you do your dissertation research on that thing which you're most interested in, but if you're going to continue to be a productive researcher you've got to kind of work where the sources are. If you're in Chicago you do Chicago stuff and if you're in the Upper Peninsula you work more towards upper Great Lakes topics, you know. So there was an awful lot here to work on, but the main thing that fueled that also was with our public history program my job is to go ahead and prepare students for jobs. So I'm setting up internships and I'm meeting people that say, "we need this and we need that," and this is the community that our program is most particularly directed at interpreting history for, though we have students work in all parts of the country. Still, most of our contacts were here. So the maritime interest and stuff – I never had a fig of an interest in maritime history – just kind of boring and obtuse to me. So we got a student in to the Chicago Historical Society and then later into the Chicago Maritime Society both working on maritime topics and that drew me in. So I got forced onto the board of this organization and then we set up, what was for a time, a really nice maritime history museum in Chicago and doing research for their exhibits and programs and films and that sort of stuff. I mean the community in a certain sense dictates what you do.

(I): Okay, sure. Would you say that rally around the flag was a result of you being involved in those projects or did it go kind of the other way around?

(TK): I got a leave of absence to finish Deep Woods Frontier, but I had already finished it. So I had the semester off, I didn't have any children at that point, and yeah the maritime stuff had gotten me a little more interested in Chicago history topics. Actually what really got me interested is one of my colleagues here was doing a film series on the history of Chicago and he asked me to write the script for the 1850's, which I did. It never was produced, but in the course of that I really began to think about how important the Civil War was, how different Chicago in the 1850's was than the city that I knew in the post-fire period. So I just decided, I got a semester off, I'm just going to go at this topic and see what I can make of it. I studiously, I mean really studiously, avoided the Civil War in graduate school and I didn't know jack shit about the Civil War, but I kind of had a little interest in the Civil War because back in '81 to '83 we did a project excavating some plantations down in Georgia and the South Carolina border and in helping run this field school down there I had to do some lecturing on slavery and reconstruction and the Civil War and so forth. In fact the town we lived in was the last capital of the confederacy – Abbeville, South Carolina – so that kind of gets you into it too. So I just researched that thing and it was sort of like a whirlwind love affair and now I do teach a class in the Civil War and remain enamored with that subject.

(I): Great. Going back to current projects you were talking about from your letter – one on the Great Lakes – is this the T.V. program you were talking about earlier?

(TK): Yeah this is the fantasy island project. We've raised about \$30,000 and all we need is \$1.5 million to produce the whole series so we're at a real low level here.

(I): So you're not at a point where you have a network or anyone that's backing this?

(TK): No, no, no. It's a collaboration between, essentially myself really, you could say Mid-America Research, but it's really myself and McGowen films. Dave's a real nice guy and a good filmmaker and he's been nominated a couple times for documentary academy awards and he's kind of just a history buff. He's never really done much in the way of history – mostly natural history kind of documentaries – but he's become a real history buff and we'll see if we can make anything of it.

(I): Okay, and the history of Lake Michigan that you referred to as kind of slow going – is this a book you're working with or...?

(TK): Yeah, yeah. That would be a book but it's supposed to be titled *A Great Lake – An Environmental Social History of Lake Michigan* and it's essentially trying to look at the Lake Michigan basin and the way in which its history has been tied to that of the region.

(I): Okay, and that's pretty much what you have on your plate right now or are there other projects that you're also working on or starting to conceive?

(TK): That Lake Michigan thing is going real slow. The one I'm probably working on most right now I've got a draft of it and I'll probably do another draft this Fall, ever since I got kids everything's been going a lot slower. But it's called *The Marble Men* and it's probably going to be an article. It's looking at statues to memorialize the Civil War and the way in which those statues can be used to interpret the long term consequences of the Civil War and the war generation.

(I): Specific to Chicago or not?

(TK): I'm using Chicago as a model but I've got a lot of illustrations from around the region too. The main thing I did last year was write a history of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and the draft has been approved but I have to make some changes now and I've got to do that by the middle of May.

(I): Okay, great. Well I'd love to see that too.

(TK): Yeah, you know I was going to send along the one I did for St. Croix National Scenic River but I then I thought would be kind of like overkill.

(I): Okay, [laughs] well I've got plenty to keep me busy this semester though I may have to work on this through the summer too, it's got me pretty interested. We'll have to see where I go with this from here. The next big heading I'm looking at to kind of wrap things up would be, and I don't know how to phrase it yet, but your involvement in the field of public history, and you've done quite a bit to try to shape the field and kind of asserted would bring it to the forefront, you know you were the chairmen on the National Council of Public History as well as secretary and treasurer, weren't you?

(TK): Yeah, I was on the founding board of directors...

(I): Maybe you could tell me just a little about how you got involved in that or is it a story?

(TK): Yeah, it's a bit of a story but that's really critical, because there was nothing more satisfying or exciting in my life than this involvement with public history. You know, I was one of these students who was very disenchanted with not just the job prospects that were out there in the field, but just the way in which, why was it that history had to be so damn boring? And it's so damn boring because historians only write for other historians in increasingly jargoned language and that irritated me when I was in graduate school. I don't mind it, you know how it is when you're researching a topic, you'll put up with any degree of boredom because it's relevant to your work. But in any event, the work that I was doing with the architectural firm down in Southern Illinois, was just a practical way to go ahead and use history and I got into simply because it was practical, useful, and I could see our end results – renovated structures, historic districts, and the like. But one day I'm working there and my boss, my immediate supervisor, comes by and he says, "Hey look at this, here's an article about this public history, looks like you historians are finally getting your act together." Well one of the tricks I learned in grad school was – you never act like you don't know what the teacher's talking about, so I said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, that's just old hat," you know. So he didn't give me the article that he was talking about public history, I had never heard of the damn thing before. And he went off to lunch so I had to sneak over to his desk and pull out this copy of history news, said "public history – what is it?" on the cover, and I'm reading about this and went, "Wow this is just what I'm doing, this is really something, this is what I've been saying all along," and after I was at Loyola for a year, I saw a notice that they were going to have a public history conference in Pittsburgh and so I called up a couple of people involved and bam I'm on the program, and then I'm on the HA program – shortly after that they called me up and put me on there to talk about public history. So here before I even know what it is, people are calling on me like I'm some kind of expert, and that's the way it was with people, it was just explosive. At the public history meeting, they said, "Well we're going to create a permanent organization to promote public history and we're going to break everybody in the conference up into small groups and everybody appoint a representative," and I spoke up and I was appointed the representative and got on the board of directors, became an officer, then became the president. They called it chairman in those days now it's called president but same thing. It was a tremendous... anybody who was young, had half a brain, and really cared about getting

the message out to the people you could go and the sky was the limit in opportunity in the late '70s, early '80s of public history. It was absolutely incredible. And if you consider that this was a time in which the job market was completely saturated, it was just incredibly fortuitous. I mean, there's no way that I ever could have dreamed up, in some kind of scotch- or bourbon-induced dream as a graduate student, that I could have dreamed up that things were going to work out the way they did.

(I): Well the other topic I've been trying to decide if I should include in at this point would be your *Anthology on Ethics and Public History* and basically I've read your introduction and I've read a couple of the articles but I don't really have a good feel for the book as a whole. I was wondering if you could tell me about basically where you were heading with it and if you feel it's coming together at all?

(TK): Well, I think – the way that book came about is – the first and foremost criticism of public history, as soon as you bring up public history there's some hide-bound \_\_\_\_\_, is they're going to talk about well, this is history for hire. You can't be objective if you're getting paid from someone. So immediately public history has this ethical thing and everybody in the first few years of public history was fighting that. I went to a Jesuit School, I was able to opt out of most of the philosophy classes, but everybody figured because I went to a Jesuit School I should know something about ethics, which I didn't. But they kept always putting me on committees to go ahead and do something about that, and so I eventually did. Now the point of that book is two-fold. One was for public history programs to pull together under one place, all the different codes of ethics, so they could train their students to know – because if you know what is appropriate content or think about potential problems ahead of time, you don't end up with problems. It's when you drift into them unawares. The second point of the book, and that's the point really of my introductory essay, is to turn the question around on the larger profession. Because what people think of as an ethical problem in public history – because you have a client who's giving you money, you're not going to tell the truth – is not a question of professional ethics, it's a question of personal ethics. Are you a liar, or are you going to tell the truth? It's not a professional question. The professional question is: how does our field as a whole, serve society? And so to say there's an ethics problem with public history is very apt, but the problem isn't with practitioners of public history, it's with the profession as a whole that has made public history a sub-field. We got into this business of public history in the '80s. Our goal was to reform the entire profession, and what they've done is made us just another one of the sub-fields. We're like women's history or African-American history or Asian history – it's just another sub-field. And they give us a certain amount of respect and attention but on the other hand they can go ahead and say, "hey, you got your sandbox over there, don't go ahead and kick any in my face."

(I): Okay, well that sounds like it really brings me back to that theme of well, the article where you describe what you mean by making history whole. Really bringing the whole profession together and then bringing it to the public.

(TK): Yeah, that's the idea. If you talk to any of your professors and ask what are their duties? They will say, "teaching, research, and service," and boy that service one is pretty hard to pin down for your average history teacher.

(I): Okay, I know I'm running pretty long on time – are you needing to get going? I had maybe one or two small questions if you have time.

(TK): Yeah, sure.

(I): What I'm looking at is – these may be more of a personal nature and may not even be necessary for the paper, so feel free to tell me if you don't want to go into it at all.

(TK): Okay.

(I): But I'm curious about when you got married and specifically because in your introduction to *Deep Woods Frontier* you mention your wife is also your dearest colleague, and I'm just curious if that was a professional relationship before, or how you meant that?

(TK): Yeah, she got her PhD also from Loyola in history a couple of years after I did. We were never in the same classes either as students or as teacher and student. But her field was Irish-American history and her book just came out last month called *What Parish Are You From?* and it's a study of the race relations of the Chicago Irish. We married in 1985, we had our first child in 1991, and those years between '85 and '91 were golden because we were just both – she was working on her book and I was working on *Isle Royal* or the Civil War or some of these other things and it was just a hell of a lot of fun. So she proofreads my work and that sort of thing.

(I): Okay. How has the, well I don't know if you want to use the word, how has your work suffered as a result of having children, or benefited?

(TK): Oh yeah, because we were both trying to maintain careers, she only teaches part-time because quite frankly she just can't get a full-time job being limited to Chicago. She's had some offers elsewhere but then we don't want to live apart either, so you know what some of that's about. But no, it's a major, major hurdle. Do you have children right now?

(I): No, we're expecting our first one in August.

(TK): Oh ok, well then there's no going back now. [laughs]

(I): And both working as well as me going to school so it's certainly going to make a dent in things.

(TK): Yeah, it will, but you know on the other hand it's the greatest thing you can do. I'm just very fortunate that it came at a time when I didn't have to do anything else. I didn't have to publish anything else, I didn't have to do anything else. It doesn't mean I stopped doing anything, but the pressure was off.

(I): So your oldest child is about four years old?

(TK): Right.

(I): And you have another child?

(TK): There's two, yeah.

(I): Okay, alright. Like I said, I don't know if this works into the paper but I'll review things and see what I come up with.

(TK): Well I think that it's a major practical problem on productivity and when you look at a lot of people who are really top scholars and that, and they have their kids right after they get that first job, they don't look like they're maybe doing too much. Maybe that's the kind of person that by age 40 and 50 when the kids are off into high school, is going to be able to do a lot more.

(I): So you think as a result of having children you've definitely had to make some decisions on where you wanted to put your efforts and your work as opposed to being able to do everything?

(TK): Right, right, yeah. Well but like that St. Croix project – first of all I never would have done it. I did it for extra money to buy a house. But then I would have turned it into a book, but it needs two long chapters at the beginning and I just can't get away to research them. So yeah that's one book that would have been written. I know Lake Michigan would have been done. Without kids I was incredibly productive in terms of... See some people they teach in the morning, they can't go home and then write and research and to me it's never a problem.

(I): Oh, okay. Well it certainly seems like you've built quite a career and I'm quite busy trying to keep up with you. [laughs]

(TK): Yeah, well don't worry about reading anything more. This is a great assignment in terms of understanding what the profession is like – we have our students do these kinds of things too.

(I): Right, it's really been an eye-opener for me, like I said I've only been a history major about a year so I'm certainly learning big in this seminar class here.

(TK): But you don't want to – what you want to spend your time on mostly is working with primary sources, and you've got some good ideas too.

(I): Right. Yeah the four books are definitely going to be framing the major part of this paper and that's what the professor is looking for and then the articles and everything that go along with that is, I think, great. You know it's going to help round things out quite a bit. But that'll probably be the major focus of my paper so you know what's coming and I'll certainly send you a copy of it.

(TK): Yeah I would very much like to see that. Like I said nobody's going to write an intellectual autobiography ever again so I might as well get yours.

(I): Well I'd love to hear your criticisms of it too and your feedback because it's something that I feel obligated to do a good job on. I mean you've certainly helped me out quite a bit and I appreciate that greatly.

(TK): Well that's okay, I thought it was an imaginative selection on your part. What are your fellow students working on?

(I): We've got all kinds of things going on in fact the professor teaching the seminar is very open to students doing historical authors, you know, non-academic sources. But we have a few doing contemporaries such as oh, and names would escape me at this time, but Civil War historians and some others in the field currently.

(TK): Mhm, a big influence on me when I was like in high school and going into history was Kenneth Roberts, did you ever read anything by him?

(I): No, I don't believe so.

(TK): An historical novelist whose most famous book was *Northwest Passage*.

(I): Oh okay, I've never read that.

(TK): Yeah I got that book from my aunt, original edition, when I was oh I must have been about six or seven. Couldn't read the book, all I could do is look at the front piece illustration you know and that's why when I went to Canada in 1959 on that trip – *Northwest Passage* is about the French and Indian Wars – seeing this French fort blew me away. And Roberts later goes into Michigan too. But all those novels by Kenneth Roberts about early America that's what probably made things most vivid to me.

(I): Okay, well the next question I had for you is do you have any plans to come up to the U.P. any time either for visiting or work or anything?

(TK): Yeah I have to return some records when I finish this Pictured Rocks history I'm going to take my boys up there for the first time.

(I): Is that right?

(TK): I bring them back some stones from Lake Superior – agates and that sort of thing – and they've got this imaginative view already of Lake Superior as some frozen, mystical land.

(I): Well I'm sure you know the area very well already but if you ever need a guide or anyone I hope you'd feel free to call me. I'd be happy to show you around or have you over if there's anything I could do for you. It'd be a pleasure to meet you.

(TK): Well you know, we get this Great Lakes project going and we have to bring film crews up there for extended periods that might be something that we could certainly do.

(I): Well I will certainly be here I have no plans to leave the area. I just moved back here a year ago, so I'm sticking around now.

(TK): Where had you been led astray?

(I): Well I went out to New Hampshire for four years, my wife worked for Yankee Publishing out there she's a writer and editor and that started my odyssey but most recently been down in Madison, Wisconsin working for Sears and decided at that point – I was going to business college then – time to get out of that I want to do something I really enjoy and I just decided to come back and get a history degree. That's something growing up here I had always been fascinated by. So I'm kind of in the middle of an early-to-mid-life crisis deciding where I'm going and feeling good about it actually now that I've made that decision anyway.

(TK): The best thing would be to, I mean in terms of job security, would be to get into secondary ed. But from there I mean, think about this public history stuff. Heritage touring is a hugely growing area of

public history and the Upper Peninsula is already a tourist draw and they're developing the market more, and the history connections with that you know, I think are something that over time, plus with that your wife's got a writing background and interest as well, you know maybe you guys could even do something together in terms of guidebooks and..

(I): Yeah we're certainly at the point where we're thinking about that a lot. But was there anything else you'd like to add as far as anything I have not mentioned or touched on that you'd want me to include in this paper that you think would help explain things or explain yourself better?

(TK): No I think you really went ahead and covered a lot of the items very well. I suppose, no I can't think of anything, yeah.

(I): Okay, well I certainly appreciate your time.

(TK): Yeah, not at all Larry.

(I): If you don't mind I'd like to send you a release form for the recording so we can put it in our archives here at the University, would that be alright?

(TK): Yeah, sure if they want to bother and archive that, fine. But no, yeah I've done enough interviews that I better sign a release form or I'll be a hypocrite. [laughter]

(I): Well I appreciate it, if you wouldn't mind, and thanks again. I think within two weeks you should probably have a copy of my paper there.

(TK): No problem, and that'd be great Larry. Take care.

(I): Thanks again Dr. Karamanski! Bye.

END OF INTERVIEW